

**Testimony of Susan Eastwood
CGA Energy and Technology Committee
March 3, 2022**

In SUPPORT of

S.B. 176, AN ACT CONCERNING SHARED CLEAN ENERGY FACILITIES.

Dear Honored Co-Chairs Senator Needleman and Representative Arconti, and Distinguished Members of the Energy and Technology Committee,

I am a resident of Ashford, the founder and Chair of the Ashford Clean Energy Task Force, and a member of Connecticut Zero Waste Coalition. I am the Chapter Chair of Sierra Club Connecticut, but I write this testimony as an individual.

I write in SUPPORT of S.B. 176, AN ACT CONCERNING SHARED CLEAN ENERGY FACILITIES.

This bill will (1) Modify existing energy caps involving shared clean energy facilities, (2) permit electric distribution companies to own solar power generation facilities within the Shared Clean Energy Facility program, and (3) to allow commercial and industrial customers in the non-residential renewable energy tariff program to use their entire roof space for generation.

Connecticut is not on target to meet its mandated goals for greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction, in fact, the most recent Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions Inventory, conducted by our Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP,) shows that GHG emissions are increasing, not decreasing. We need to act now to adopt policies to allow and encourage more renewable energy, and to phase out the use of fossil fuels.

This bill is important because it would open the door for increased adoption of solar for business in Connecticut. It would save energy and costs for the businesses, help the state to meet its goals for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, create jobs and stimulate the local economy.

The bill would also raise the cap on shared clean energy facilities, which would allow more to enjoy the benefits of renewable energy, even if their property was not a suitable site. Local solar and storage create a more resilient and lower-cost electric grid, and will benefit underserved communities.

Currently, because of outdated and unnecessary regulations, more than half of interested business owners and municipalities cannot reduce their electric costs by installing solar on their premises. Connecticut legislators can fix this problem this session by amending S.B. 176 to increase the cap on commercial solar from 50 to 100 megawatts (MW) and the cap on Shared Clean Energy Facilities (SCEF) from 25 to 50 MW. Raising these program caps can be done at negligible, short-term ratepayer cost.

I encourage the committee to work towards real solutions to air pollution, inequity, and the climate crisis by passing strong legislation to support renewable energy and to make it accessible to all.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Susan Eastwood
Chair, Ashford Clean Energy Task Force
Chapter Chair, Sierra Club CT
Ashford, CT